

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 ORM-02 DHA-02 AID-05 EUR-12
OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IGA-02
ABF-01 /094 W
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R 310656Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1135
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY VEINNA
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 8883

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, PINT, SY
SUBJECT: UNRWA SYRIAN OPERATIONS: CAMPS QUIESCENT DESPITE
RATION CUTBACK

REF: DAMASCUS 7296

1. EMBOFFS MET WITH UNRWA DIRECTOR FOR SYRIA, SILLEN,
DEC. 29 FOR UPDATE ON UNRWA OPERATIONS. ACCORDING TO
SILLEN, UNRWA WAS UNDER PRESSURE FROM SARG TO CONTINUE
RATIONING FLOUR AT NORMAL LEVELS THROUGHOUT FALL 1976,
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS EVIDENT THAT SUPPLIES INSUFFICIENT FOR
ENTIRE YEAR. AS RESULT UNRWA HAD TO DISCONTINUE DISTRI-
BUTION FLOUR TO CAMPS FOR DECEMBER, BUT THIS SHORTAGE
SOMEWHAT OFFSET BY LAST-MINUTE JAPANESE CONTRIBUTION OF
RICE. ORIGINALLY SYRIANS AGREED TO EXCHANGE FLOUR
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FOR RICE TO PERMIT FLOW OF NORMAL RATIONS BUT THEY
REFUSED SUCH EXCHANGE IN EARLY DECEMBER AND, CONSEQUENTLY,
UNRWA WENT AHEAD WITH RICE DISTRIBUTION TOTALLING SIX
KILOS PER PERSON VICE NORMAL TEN KILOS OF FLOUR.

2. SILLEN SAID UNRWA WILL NOT RECEIVE SHIPMENTS OF

FLOUR FOR 1977 UNTIL NEXT MAY. HOWEVER, UNRWA HAS SARG COMMITMENT TO LOAN AGENCY FLOUR UNTIL ITS NEW SUPPLIES ARRIVE. EVEN THESE SUPPLIES ONLY SUFFICIENT PERMIT DISTRIBUTION OF SEVEN KILOS PER RECIPIENT. PALESTINIANS, WHO PREDICTABLY UPSET BY THIS, FEAR THAT TEMPOARY MEASURE WILL BECOME PERMANENT. SILLEN INDICATED TO EMBOFFS THAT HE FEARED CURRENT PROPOSED LEVEL OF FUNDING FOR 1977 UNRWA OPERATIONS, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS SAME AS 1976 LEVELS, INSUFFICIENT TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF SERVICES IN FIELDS EDUCATION AND HEALTH.

3. INSPITE OF SUC PROBLEM, HE INDICATED THAT SITUATION IN CAMPS VERY QUIET AS RESULT STRINGENT SYRIAN SECURITY MEASURES. SILLEN NOTED NUMBER OF INQUIRIES ABOUT LOCATING "MISSING PERSONS" HAS INCREASED CONSIDERABLY THIS MONTH. WHILE NUMBER OF PALESTINIAN DETAINEES ARE BEING GRADUALLY RELEASED, EVEN MORE ARE APPARENTLY BEING PICKED-UP BY AUTHORITIES. AS RESULT, PALESTINIANS UNDERSTANDABLY CAUTIOUS ABOUT PROTESTING ANYTHING TOO LOUDLY.

4. REGARDING PALESTINIAN REFUGEES WHO FLED LEBANON, SILLEN BELIEVED NUMBER WAS CONSIDERABLE BUT HE UNABLE GIVE GOOD ESTIMATE BECASUE SARG INISTED THAT BEFORE ANY PALESTINIANS FROM LEBANON WERE GIVEN UNRWA RATIONS OR OTHER BENEFITS, THEY REGISTER WAS PARA (PALESTINIAN ARAB REFUGEE AGENCY), SYRIAN INSTITUHION RESPONSIBLE FOR PALESTINIAN REFUGEE AFFAIRS. SINCE MOST PALESTINIANS FLEEING LEBANON FEARED SUCH REGISTRATION WOULD LEAD TO DEPORTATION, THEY PREFERRED NOT TO COMPLY AND FEND FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THEMSELVES. HE THOUGHT MANY SUCH INDIVIDUALS HAVE NOW MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO LEBANON OR HAVE FOUND NICHE FOR THEMSELVES IN LOCAL ECONOMY.

5. ACCORDING TO SILLEN, WHILE SYRIANS STILL BALK AT ANY APPEARANCE OF ACCEPTING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH THEY BELIEVE OUGHT TO RESIDE WITH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THEY MORE READY THAN EVER TO ASSIST UNRWA WITH GRANTS AND LOANS OF MATERIAL ASSISTANCE. HE FEELS SARG DEFINITELY CONCERNED TO HEAD-OFF ANY TENSIONS WITHIN CAMPS ARISING FROM CUTBACKS IN RATIONS OR SERVICES; IT PROTESTS VIGOROUSLY TO UNRWA WHENEVER IT BELIEVES ANY SUCH REDUCTIONS BEING CONSIDERED.
MURPHY

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